



Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

A CONJECTURE AS TO THE ORIGIN OF THE NAME OF CARRICKFERGUS.

A difficulty occurs in early history, in which Scotia Major and Scotia Minor are both concerned. It is that of our ancient authors having shipwrecked and drowned a monarch who never existed, near Carrickfergus. Such playful liberties were sometimes taken by our Senachies and Fileas to give an interest to their narratives. That our ancient writers had recourse to the invention and decoration of such fables is not wonderful, since our modern journalists are said to be in the habit of enlivening their columns by occasionally burning an ideal child at Cork or Waterford.

I believe it is generally known that the early historiographers of Scotland had recourse to Ireland for much of their information respecting Scottish affairs. That Hector Boethius, in writing his Scottish History, received assistance from Cornelius Historicus, an Irishman, who lived about the year 1230, (and whose life has been written by Stanihurst,) there is no doubt. Hector Boethius was himself given to embellishment, and indulged the unlimited freedom of his imagination in working out narratives from the most meagre materials. He was followed in some respects by Fordun, Major, and even Buchanan. This last-mentioned distinguished Latin poet and scholar was ignorant of, and actually despised the languages of Britain as barbarous.^a Many of your readers will remember the story of Scotia having obtained its name from Scota, a daughter of Pharaoh, King of Egypt, who married Gathelus, son of Cecrops, King of Athens; and likewise the legend of Fergus I. having been wrecked and drowned in the lough of Belfast. This Fergus is said to have been crowned on the fatal marble chair,^b at Scone, in the year of the world 3,641, before the coming of Christ 339 years, in the first year of the 12th Olympiad, in the year 421 after the building of Rome, and about the beginning of the fourth monarchy, when Alexander the Great vanquished Darius, the last King of Persia. We read in Buchanan, that Fergus having quieted matters in Scotland, returned to Ireland to quell seditions, which being adjusted, on his return a tempest suddenly arising, he was drowned, not far from the port called from him Fergus's rock, i.e. Knock Fergus. His words are:—*"Ipse deinde, rebus in Scotia pacatis, ad comprimendas auctoritate sua seditiones in Hiberniam transiit, rebusque ibi compositis, in reditu, non procul evectus e portu, cui Rupes Fergusii nomen est, coorta repente tempestate, interiit, anno regni sui vicesimo quinto."* The absurdity of such mythic notices in the early Scottish history has been ably proved by the Bishop of Worcester, and been replied to by Sir George Mackenzie. Bishop Stillingfleet wrote in vindication of Worcester. Richard Stanihurst says:—"These fabulous dreams happily may move admiration in some old wives, applause to some Abderas, and laughter to the discrete reader. The Scotch had, as other

^a "Quod ad me attinet, malim ignorare veterem illam anilem priscorum Britannorum balbutiem, quam dedicere quodcumque hoc est sermonis Latini, quod magno cum labore puer didici." Buchanan, Lib. I.

^b It is rather singular that the Scottish coronation-stone, now in Westminster Abbey, and the "Stone of Divination," at Clogher (Co. Tyrone), both consist of a species of freestone.

nations heretofore, (though now famous,) base beginning, dusk'd and obscured with some barbarous rudeness, and this had been more discretion to confesse, than to vaunt and crake among the ignorant, with boast of their famed doings." Now, if the views of the Bishop of Worcester, Bishop Stillingfleet, and Stanihurst, be correct, we may no more rely on many of the early tales of our chronicles than on the authenticity of the portraits of Scottish kings in the Palace of Holyrood. Every one who is acquainted with the mediæval Irish and Scottish histories, knows how much our bards have been in the habit of giving their fictions the semblance of truthfulness, by narrating merely ideal circumstances, and connecting them with known localities. William Slatyer, in his *History of England*, gives a Latin and likewise an English metrical version of these feigned transactions, acknowledging them to be fabulous. See Ode x., Canz. xiii. The following is his English version :—

"Renda first reigned, says reverend Bede,
In Brittish Scotland, though we reade
In Scottish Annalls how th' Egyptian
Pharao's Impe Scota, with her Gracian
Husband Gathelus long did raigne,
With their succession kings in Spaine ;
Whence Scots were nam'd! and Brechus King ;
Their colonies they to Ireland bring :
From whom the Great Fergusus came,
Whom to her Erchus beares, faire Dame,
Danish Rocha, to her Spanish spouse,
Of Scotland's Kings ennobled House ;
He with Goth Alaricke made Rome flame,
Fergus that gave Craig-Fergus name ;
And brought with him so long agone,
Scots gloried in the fatall stone,
Jacob lay on, in the Land of Syon ;
With British-Scotsh Kings Armes their Lyon!"

If these narratives of our chronologers are to be regarded as myths, and are only worthy of being placed amongst curious and amusing extracts from our annals, we may, with Dr. Heylin, without ceremony, discard the name of Fergus I. from our historic pages. In dispensing with Fergus, the feigned incident falls to the ground, and we are left at liberty to search for the origin of the name of Carrickfergus in the Celtic language. We know that the Castle of Carrickfergus is situated on a basaltic rock that juts out into the ocean. There can be little doubt that this rock had, in ancient times, been designated "the rock of the sea," in contradistinction to inland crags. The Irish name for "rock of the sea," is *Carraig na Fairge*. Now, might not this Irish name of the rock have been very readily corrupted, and Latinised into Carrickfergus? And might not the term *Fairge* have induced some ancient historiographer, long previous to the time of Boethius, to grace his fanciful tale by drowning the imaginary hero, Fergus, at *Carraig na Fairge*, where a similarity of names gave countenance to the fiction?

To say more on this subject may be unnecessary. In Lough Fergus, in the estuary of the Shannon, there are likewise a *Knockfergus*, and a *Fortfergus*, the names of which have, no doubt, also originated in the Irish words *Cnoc-na-Fairge*; for I have not been able to learn anything of the drowning of a merely nominal king in that noble river.

J. BELL.